

Israel Is Not a Democracy

As an integral part its ongoing propaganda, Israel, along with its fervent supporters and [legions of paid and anonymous agents](#), zealously repeats and disseminates - in the media, on university campuses, in blogs and comment sections, at conferences and more - the same old, tired Zionist myths.

Propaganda guides and tool kits, such as the “[global language dictionary](#)”, offer ready-made arguments and counter-arguments to [sell Israel](#) to journalists and critics. Such talking points come with tips on what tone and rhetorical tactics to use, what words and formulas “work”, and how to discuss “sensitive” issues, such as Israel’s illegal colonisation and annexation of Palestinian land, Jewish settlements and the killing of civilians.

All of which are now set to get worse since US President Donald Trump has both rewarded and emboldened Israel by recognising its illegal and brutal colonisation (its “settlements”). By the same token he has offered yet another spectacular demonstration of the complete contempt of the United States for the rule of international law.

Setting such an example will only send the message to all the despots, autocrats and tyrants of various stripes around the globe that not only it is ok to steal, colonise, and brutalise weak and defenceless populations, but that you may even be rewarded by the West for adopting the “law of the jungle”.

Disinformation Machine

The media is saturated with uplifting news about the “Israeli economic miracle”, its wealth and high living standards, and its thriving startup and high-tech industry. But have you ever heard from a mainstream Western media outlet or politician that [a fifth of Israelis](#) live below the poverty line, that people are forced to [look through rubbish for food](#) to avoid starving, or that Israel has [the highest poverty rate](#) in all of the developed world?

The answer is most likely not, and we should ask ourselves why. Other lies propagated by Israel’s disinformation machine include [origin myths](#), the most famous being the

romantic theme of Palestine as “a land [without a people](#) for a people without a land”, which strangely persists, despite its historical absurdity. Israel relies a lot on ignorance and gullibility.

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This magnificent [interactive photographic collection](#) of pre-1948 Palestine is enough to pulverise that revisionist lie, which seeks to eliminate the very notion of the existence of Palestinians on the land before it was taken from them by Western colonial powers to be given to Jewish emigrants from Europe and elsewhere. Palestinians were made to pay for a Holocaust that Europe had committed, and in which they themselves played no part.

Besides the pathetic nature of such PR operations to counter critics and improve Israel’s disastrous [global image](#), its effectiveness is [more than a little uncertain](#).

When news and images of [Israel’s killing and mutilation of Palestinian children](#), deliberate [bombing of schools](#), and indiscriminate use of [white phosphorus on entire neighbourhoods](#) circulate around the world, it is hard to convincingly portray such a predatory, violent and terrorist rogue state as noble, democratic, peaceful or gentle.

Zionist Myths

By far the most common Zionist myth is the notion that Israel is the “[only democracy](#)” in the region - one that some even describe as a liberal, egalitarian, Western-style democracy. This grotesque, self-serving fairytale perpetuates the fallacy of a similarity of regimes, of a common destiny, and of a natural alliance between Israel and Western nations. Racist propaganda often pits this against the inevitably “barbaric”, backward and undemocratic Arab states and Muslim-majority societies.

This misleading description echoes the larger, even more sinister - but [equally fallacious](#) - Huntingtonian “[clash of civilizations](#)” discourse, which is itself the cultural reformulation in civilisational terms of the old ideologies of racial differences.



Israeli security forces escort Jewish settlers at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound on 2 June (AFP)

Repeating a lie multiple times does not make it true, although Israel's agents clearly think it does. Israel is no democracy, and certainly not a "liberal, egalitarian" state. Two cold, hard facts can easily debunk this myth.

Firstly, there is the acquisition of Israeli nationality and citizenship through religion. The Law of Return allows any Jew, anywhere in the world, to emigrate to Israel and obtain full Israeli citizenship, whether or not they have ever set foot there or have any relatives living there. A privileged, royal path to citizenship is reserved exclusively for Jews, while being [denied](#) to members of other religions. Religious discrimination is thus institutionalised as official policy.

Archaic Marriage Laws

Just imagine for a minute how "democratic" countries such as France, Germany, Britain or the United States would be if they decided that from now on, Christians from all over the world - but only Christians - could freely emigrate and settle there, and unlike members of any other religion, or even atheists, they would automatically be granted citizenship upon arrival.

This would amount to discarding their most fundamental and basic democratic principles, including their cherished secularism - but such institutionalised religious discrimination is exactly what Israel practices.



Why Israel cannot be called a democratic state
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Secondly, there is the issue of marriage. Given the massive pro-Israeli propaganda machine, coupled with the silent complicity of our Western media and governments, many people might be unaware that in Israel, [only religious authorities are allowed](#) to officiate marriages. Civil, non-religious marriages are not permitted.

Even worse, inter-religious, mixed marriages are [also forbidden by law](#), forcing inter-religious couples to [marry abroad](#). When they return, the non-Jewish partner often receives second-class citizen treatment by the state.

Again, let's imagine what would happen to the French, British, German or US democracies if we were to apply such archaic principles. Rather unthinkably for those of us living in actual democracies, the Israeli state manages to make those already backward practices even harsher, [levying a two-year prison sentence](#) on couples who get married by a religious authority not accredited by the state.

Despite all this, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his PR minions continually explain to us - with a straight face - how democratic, egalitarian, tolerant, open and enlightened the state of Israel has always been, and how it grants all of its citizens equal rights.

Institutionalised Apartheid

Israel was already a profoundly racist, unequalitarian, undemocratic, ethno-religious state before the [nation-state law was passed](#) last year. Now, it is even worse.

Conceived of from the start as an ethno-religious “Jewish state” - a description it has [finally openly acknowledged](#) through the nation-state law - just as other countries thought of themselves as “white states” (South Africa, the segregationist US), it is not surprising that Israel quickly instituted a veritable apartheid system.

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This reality is easily visible to anyone on the ground, and has been abundantly documented for decades by the [media](#), all major [human rights organisations](#), UN-mandated independent [teams on the ground](#), [Palestinian](#) and [Israeli activists](#), [NGOs](#) and [academics](#), who explain how Israel’s apartheid regime constantly invents [new, creative ways](#) to perpetuate and consolidate itself.

Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants have themselves denounced Israel as a structurally segregationist, and even fascist, apartheid state. One can safely assume that when you have survived Auschwitz, as did Professor [Hajo Meyer](#), you can recognise fascism in action - particularly in your own country.

[ANC veterans](#) who spent their own lives fighting apartheid in South Africa have also declared that [what they saw in Israel](#) was in some respects worse than what they confronted at home. Even [US President Jimmy Carter](#) wrote an entire book on Israel’s apartheid, explaining how Palestinians were caged in an open-air prison worse than what the South Africans had to face.

Legalised Discrimination

Israel's discrimination against its Arab citizens, among [others](#), is thus not just a [societal](#), economic or cultural phenomenon. Every country has a share of that. In Israel's case, discrimination is institutionalised, inscribed in its justice system as well.

"Israeli law includes numerous provisions that explicitly assert and institutionalise a [principle of inequality](#) between Jews and Arabs," notes Arab-Israeli professor and politician Yousef Jabareen.

"To cite only one example, the Israeli flag, with its Star of David, represents only the Jewish majority of the country. But this differential treatment is certainly not limited to the realm of the symbolic. It exists in all domains of life: the definition of the state and its symbols, but also immigration laws, citizenship, political participation, [access to land](#), culture, religion, [budgetary policies](#), etc."



Netanyahu attends a meeting of the right-wing bloc at the Knesset in Jerusalem on 20 November (AFP)

Similar to the Law of Return, the “settlements” in the occupied West Bank - often direct breaches of [Israeli law itself](#) and major [violations of international law](#) - are exclusively reserved for Jews.

Israel invests considerable resources there on infrastructure and social services, but non-Jews are not allowed to live in the settlements - even though they are often built on [confiscated land privately owned by Palestinians](#).

These settlers live among a population of more than three million Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, who live under an all-pervasive, brutal military occupation. Another two million Palestinians live under siege and ongoing military terror in Gaza. None have a right to vote in Israeli elections.

Again, imagine the outcry if Britain or the US started invading territories outside of their internationally recognised borders, illegally annexed the land and resources, and then began creating Christian-only settlements in those areas.

The dozens of Israeli laws that explicitly discriminate against Arab citizens and Palestinians in the occupied territories are well [documented](#). They can be accessed through the [Adalah](#) searchable [database](#), and they apply to all aspects of Palestinian life: citizenship, education, political and economic rights, residency, language, culture, religion, and so on.

Hyper-violent Colonialism

Even access to water, the most fundamental and life-sustaining resource, is the object of differential treatment by Israel, which has never hesitated to confiscate water or to use it as a war weapon to [collectively punish](#) entire populations.

Since the nation-state law has been adopted, Israel’s already systemic discrimination has become [even worse](#), with new laws being passed to [further entrench and expand inequality](#).



Israeli protest crackdown defies notion of 'democracy'

In addition to all of this evidence that Israel is no democracy, the state has also become globally infamous for its relentless, illegal, supremacist, hyper-violent colonialism; its annexation of land at gunpoint; its terroristic military; and its armies of [fanatic Jewish “settlers”](#), who are little more than international rogues and [land thieves](#).

During its half-century of [illegal occupation and annexation](#), which is now doomed to [get even worse](#), Israel has wilfully and knowingly violated almost every major international law convention, treaty and [UN resolution](#), including the Geneva Conventions, the UN Charter, the 1947 Partition Plan, the Camp David and Oslo accords, and so on.

Such lawless behaviour has given Israel the distinct honour of being among the countries that for decades have been, and continue to be, regularly [condemned](#) by all major [human rights](#) organisations out there, and [by the UN itself](#).

Distinctly Israeli Terror

It is difficult to find a worse rogue state than Israel. From its very inception, writ with ethnic cleansing, Israel has made the collective punishment of defenceless civilian populations, the [killing of entire families](#), the [deliberate mutilation](#) of children,

the [bombing of schools and hospitals](#), and other barbaric atrocities as distinctly, recognisably Israeli as challah, hamin and gefilte fish.

Even Israeli soldiers themselves ... are exposing and documenting Israel's systematic and deliberate targeting of defenceless Palestinians

Even [Israeli soldiers themselves](#) - thousands of them, often elite [soldiers](#) regrouped in veteran organisations such as [Breaking the Silence](#) - are exposing and documenting Israel's systematic and deliberate targeting of defenceless Palestinians. As much as the ANC veterans know apartheid, and Holocaust survivors know fascism, when they see it, these brave soldiers surely know what they are talking about, as they were once a part of it.

But they, too, are probably just “antisemites” or “self-hating Jews”; instead of them, maybe we ought to believe the likes of Netanyahu, who continues to claim that Israel is the region's “only democracy”?